

The Horse Thief.

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS.

By Dr. Albert Carr.

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A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS.

By Dr. Albert Carr.

*Author of The Irish Prince;
The Shining Mystery; The
Bedrock Flume; The Wife and
the Sword; The Miner's Dream;
The Pierre Trail, and other
dramas.*

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HILL CITY, S. D.
1914.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS.

ROBERT BARDOAN. A wealthy horse rancher and widower.

MILES CORSON. A banker. The secret accomplice of a band of desperate horse thieves.

HAL HALPIN. A cowboy on his way back to home and civilization.

SHERIFF GRANSON. "Tom" Gran-son, the sheriff of the county.

WILLIE WYM. A girlish young man. Traveling salesman for a Boston millinery house.

JACK HIGGINS. A horse thief.

"MEXICAN" PETE. A horse thief.

"WILDCAT" JAKE. A bad man.

Sheriff's posse.

HELEN BARDOAN. Bardoan's only child and daughter. A brave girl and a dead shot.

KATE O'BRIAN. An Irish bachelor girl. Bardoan's neighbor. Known on the range as the Horse Queen of Elk creek.

SOPHRONIA SIMPSON. A wealthy old maid from Boston. Friend of Wil-
lie's grandmother.

The Horse Thief.

ACT I.

SCENE. Trout fisher's camp in the mountains—the Black Hills. Heavy spruce and pine on mountain sides. Rough log bridge over stream running across stage, rear. Spruce trees, R. Extinguished fire, coffee-pot ect. near it. Tent, L. with camp-chairs, boxes, etc. scattered about it.

Enter Kate O'Brian from R. over bridge. Has fishing-rod and long string of trout.

Kate. The fresh mountain air gives the throu't a graite appetite. They gobble the bait, fishhook, feathers, and and all.

[*Holds up string of trout.*
That's as fine a string o' throu't as was iver caught in the Black Hills.

Enter Willie Wym from R. over bridge. Has fishing-rod

and one little trout.

Willie. Is that you, Katy?

Kate. Yes, Willie. Did you catch any?

Willie. Yes--one.

[Holds up one little trout.]

Kate. Sure, the throut are playin' with you.

Willie. Do trout play with a fellow, Katy?

Kate. Yes, whin girly-boys try to catch them.

Willie. I think they are just like girls. When you want them, they won't bite.

Kate. You're right, Willie. Throut and girrels are jist alike. Whin you think you've got thim, they wiggle off your hook, and are gone. If you are as successful with the girrels as you are with the throut, I'm afraid you'll be a long time gettin' a wife.

Willie. The trees were so green; the sky so blue; and the birdies chirpped so sweetly, I could not keep my mind on the trout.

Kate. It is not the trees; nor the sky; nor the burdies that's turnin' your little head, but thoughts of swate Helen Bardoan.

Willie. I never thought of her once,

while I was fishing.

Kate. May'be it was Sophronia?

Willie. What, that awful, old maid! Think of her?

Kate. Why not, Willie? She'll bite aisy and without much angling.

Willie. Why, she talks to me like I was a little boy, and tries to hug me.

Kate. Why don't you let her?

Willie. Because I don't allow women to hug me.

Kate. That's right, Willie; protect yourself and be dacint.

Enter Robert Bardoan R. over bridge. Has fishing-rod and string of trout.

Robert. You quit, Willie? How many did you get?

[Willie holds up one little trout. (Laughs) Only one, Willie?

Willie. That's all, Robert. It was awful game.

Robert. It must have been, to take you all the morning to catch it.

[Holds up string of trout. That's what I call luck! The Bardoans are all good fishers.

Kate. *(Holding up her string of trout.)* So are the O'Brians.

Robert. By my feelings, Kate, its about dinner time.

Kate. All right, Robert. You start the fire, and I'll tend to the eatables.

Robert. Well, here we go.

[*Robert and Kate busy themselves getting lunch. Robert builds fire under spruce tree, R. Kate ex-temporize table of boxes and boards, C. and sets table.*]

Robert. Have you seen, Sophronia?

Kate. No, Robert; not since she started off after Willie.

Robert. Willie's here.

[*Hangs coffee-pot on fire.*]

Kate. Well, she's not far away.

Willie. She chases me everywhere.

Robert. She's a chaser, is she?

Willie. Something awful!

[*Enter Sophronia Simpson from R. over bridge. She has fishing-rod with large black fish on it.*]

Sophronia. Look, Robert, I've caught a great, big, black trout.

[*Holds up fish.*]

Willie. (*Aside.*) There's that horrid old woman!

[*Runs off, R.*]

Robert. A black trout, Sophronia?

Sophronia. Yes, and its the first time I ever fished for trout in my life.

Robert. That's a sucker--a big black sucker.

Sophronia. U g-g-h! What shall I do with it?

Robert. Cook it for Willie.

Willie. (*Looking on at R.*) I'll never eat it,—no, never! It would give me appendicitis.

[*Disappears.*

Sophronia. (*Dropping rod and fish*) Well, I declare if there isn't little Willie! Willie! Willie!

[*Runs off, R.*

Robert. (*Laughing.*) Poor little Willie!

Kate. She's awful fond of him.

Robert. Yes, but Willie doesn't seem to take to her.

Kate. No, he takes to the woods.

Robert. I don't see why she should think Willie possible. She is old enough to be his mother.

Kate. She's tried her luck on all the rist of you, but couldn't get a bite. Willie 's all that's left.

Robert. He may be the sucker,

Kate. They say she's worth a hundred thousand dollars. Willie may bite at that.

Robert. Well, Willie needs a guardian, anyway.

[*Willie runs across stage from R. to L. followed by Sophronia.*

Willie. It is just terrible!

{*Exit, L.*

Sophronia. Now, Willie dear, do wait.

[*Exit, L.*]

Kate. Willie 's playin' throu't with her. If she iver catches him, she'll have to put him in an aquarium.

Robert. The coffee is boiling. You you better call Sophronia and Willie.

Kate. They'll come when Willie gets out of breath. But Robert, Helen ought to be here by this time.

Robert. She is with Corson. They know its dinner time. They ought to be here.

[*Goes up on bridge and looks off R.*]
I don't see anything of them.

[*Advances.*]

Did they follow us up stream?

Kate. Really, I didn't observe.

Robert. Oh, well! daughter will come. I don't think she would stray away from Corson.

Kate. May'be not.

Robert. Are you ready for the coffee?

Kate. Yes, Robert.

Robert. Well, here it is, hot and strong.

[*Pours coffee in two tin cups. They sit down at table, C. Hands Kate cup of coffee. They eat and drink.*]
I'm glad the members of our fishing party are enjoying themselves. They

all seem to have paired off but you and I.

Kate. Will you have some sugar in your coffee?

[*Hands Robert sugar.*

Robert. (*Putting sugar in coffee.*) What do you say to our taking a little affectionate interest in each other?

Kate. Here's the craime.

[*Hands Robert can of cream. He pours cream in coffee.*

Robert. Our ranches join; our horses run on the same range; and are branded in the same corral. You are a woman of twenty eight, and I am a widower of forty four. If this affectionate interest, of which I speak, should become serious, we can do as others have done,—get married.

Kate. You and I, Robert Bardoan, have been the best of friends ever since I came to the Hills and took the claim. You've made money in horses, and I've made money in horses—Have a spoon for your coffee.

[*Gives him large iron spoon.*

Robert. (*Taking spoon.*) You don't mean—(*Aside*) Spoon means spooney. This is a hint. A big one too, judging from the size of the spoon. (*To Kate, sheepishly.*) Kate, what did you really

give me this spoon for?

Kate. As a souvenir.

Robert. When I get back to the ranch, I'll tie a blue ribbon on it and hang it up in the best room in the house.

Kate. Very good, jist so you don't hang it over that blue ribbon cupboard of yours.

[Robert grins and winks at audience.]

Robert. Say, Kate, did you ever have a lover?

Kate. Yes; a conductor.

Robert. Where is he now?

Kate. In jail.

Robert. Huh! Did that conductor make love to you?

Kate. Sure.

Robert. How did he begin?

Kate. He asked me, if I'd ever loved a man.

Robert. What did you tell him?

Kate. I told him, yes.

Robert. Did you tell him who the man was?

Kate. I did.

Robert. Will you tell me?

Kate. Why, sure.

Robert. Who was it?

Kate. Me father.

[A pause. Robert eats.]

Robert. (*Aside.*) I wonder, if I'll ever succeed in making a beginning with her? (*To Kate.*) Say, Kate, barring your father, who was the first man you ever took an affectionate interest in?

Kate. An old man.

Robert. (*Cheerfully.*) Who was *he*?

Kate. The milkman. I was raised on the bottle.

Robert. Oh, bosh!

[*Takes iron spoon out of pocket, and lays it on table.*]

Kate, is there anything in this world I can do to obtain your serious consideration?

Kate. Yes, Robert.

Robert. Speak, dear girl, what is it?

Kate. Let me ait me dinner.

Robert. Roped again!

Enter Sophronia, L., leading Willie by the hand. He hangs back like an unwilling child.

Kate. That's right, Sophronia, bring him to dinner.

Sophronia. Dinner! And all ready!

[*Trips to table, nips up a piece of cake deftly with her fingers and eats.*]

This is that lovely ginger-bread.

Robert. Have some coffee, Sophronia.

[Pours coffee into a tin cup and hands it to Sophronia.]

Come, Willie.

[Pours coffee into a tin cup and gives it to Willie.]

Sophronia. Come, sit by me, Willie dear.

Willie. No; I want to eat my dinner.

Kate. Have a sandwich, Willie.

[Willie takes sandwich.]

Sophronia. And here is some of that lovely ginger-bread.

Willie. *(Loftily.)* I don't want any ginger-bread. I never eat any kind of cake but lady's fingers and summer dreams.

Robert. Here is some summer sausage, Willie.

Willie. Oh, heavens—no!

Kate. Have some olives.

Willie. Olives! Castor oil—u-g-g-h! No.

Kate. Have some salmon.

Willie. Yes. I am fond of fish.

[Takes some on a plate.]

When I eat fish, I think of the sea; not what you see, but the sea, in which you see the water.

[Gives his little laugh.]

Kate. Will you have a lemon?

Willie. Yes, give me a lemon!

Kate. Well, here it is.

[*Gives him lemon.*

Willie. I must be brave and learn to love the lemon, because—

Sophronia. You silly child! Sit down and eat your little dinner.

[*Willie sits down at good distance from Sophronia right, and eats.*

Robert. (*Rising.*) I don't see why Helen doesn't come. She promised to be here by noon. She has always kept her word with me before. I will take my rifle and walk down stream and see if I can find her.

[*Get rifle out of tent. Cross bridge and exit, L.*

Kate. Have you seen anything of Helen, Willie?

Willie. No, Katy. She went with Mr. Corson.

Kate. She was with him the last I saw of her. You haven't seen her anywhere along the creek have you, Sophronia?

Sophronia. No; I was with Willie.

Willie. (*Aside.*) I could not get away from her. I wish she was on Pike's Peak.

Kate. I'll put the fish in the tank, and take a look meself.

[*Put fish in tank right of bridge.*

Sophronia. Won't you have some cheese, Willie?

Willie. I never eat cheese. I'm no mouse.

[Gives his little laugh.]

Sophronia. Have some beans.

Willie. *(Jumping up.)* Beans! Oh, Horrors, no!

[Kate advances, draws revolver from belt, examines it, and puts it back in belt.]

Kate. Well, I'm going to take a stroll up the creek, and see if I can find Helen. Take care o' yersels till I come back.

[Cross bridge and exit, R.]

Willie. I'm going, too.

[Places cup and plate on table, C.]

Sophronia. *(Jumping up.)* No, stay, Willie.

Willie. You can stay.

Sophronia. If you go; I go.

Willie. Well, I'm going.

[Run across bridge and exit, R.]

Sophronia. *(Running after him across bridge.)* Willie! Willie! Wait for me! Wait for me!

[Exit, R.]

Jack Higgins and Mexican

Pete steal on, R

Jack. Here's the camp, Pete.

Pete. Look in that tent.

[Jack looks in tent.]

Jack. All clear.

Pete. Is Corson with them?

Jack. Yes. He induced Bardoan to come up into the mountains after trout, so that Bardoan would be away while the boys were down on his range picking up his horses.

Pete. No like this way, Jack.

Jack. Corson is here with Bardoan, where he can watch him and warn us.

Pete. Oh, hell!

Jack. Its the right thing, Pete. We have eleven of Bardoan's horses up in the old stockade.

Pete. All in stockade, hah?

Jack. Every hoof. The stockade is about three miles from here.

Pete. I know those place. Boys said, I should to come up and help you.

Jack. Corson sent word by one of the boys, to move on into Wyoming to-night.

Pete. With the whole bunch?

Jack. Yes, Pete. They are good stock, and gentle as sheep. Bardoan's pet is among them. Our first stop will be at old Frenchie's, just over the line. He will fix up the brands.

Pete. To-night to go to Wyoming?

Jack. Yes. Once in Wyoming, we are safe. We've converted the stockade into a corral. It is a fine place. So hid-

den and out of the way.

Pete. Miles Corson is a smart fellow. He has a bank, and he is go to the church that no one is suspicion that he is of the horse thief to make his money.

Jack. Hush! Don't talk so loud.

Pete. No one here.

Jack. Well, you go up to the stockade. I'll be there shortly. I'm going to hang 'round here awhile, and see if I can get a word with Corson.

Pete. Get some money and some whiskey.

Jack. Yes, if he has the stuff with him.

Pete. S'long!

Jack. S'long, Pete!

[*Exit, Pete, R.*]

I must see, Corson. I—some one coming.

[*Hurries off, R.*]

Enter Helen Bardoan and Miles Corson, L. Throw fishing rods down near tent. Miles lays fish-basket on table.

Miles. (*Advancing.*) I must have an answer.

Helen. You *must*?

Miles. My love for you, Helen, grows impatient.

Helen. True love never grows impa-

tient. Its patience is as enduring as its hope. Better wait, Miles. I do not care to answer to-day.

Miles. (*Sulkily.*) I must know my fate.

Helen. Your fate!

Miles. (*Aggressively.*) I must have a an answer *now*.

Helen. You are quite positive in your demand.

Miles. The madness of my love drives me to it. I can bear this suspense no longer.

Helen. What would you do, were I to answer, no?

Miles. What would any man do, whose love for a woman consumes him? (*Desperately.*) It must be, yes.

Helen. I fear, I do not understand you.

Miles. We are alone in this silent forest. I am your protector, your friend, your lover—

Helen. Miles Corson, I realize we are alone. I have been alone—alone on the range at midnight, with nothing to break its wide silence but the bark of the coyote or the hoot of the ground owl. I needed no one to protect me then; I need no one to protect me now. I feel perfectly able to protect myself.

[*Draws revolver from pocket.*]

Miles. (*Aside.*) She is a dead shot.

Helen. Come, have some dinner.

[*Low whistle off, R.*

Miles. (*Startled.*) No—I am not hungry.

Helen. Not hungry! You haven't eaten since morning.

[*Picks up sandwich from table and eats.*

I am hungry.

[*Low whistle off, R. Helen notices it.*

Better have some coffee.

Miles. No—not now.

Helen. It is still warm.

[*Pours coffee in tin cup and drinks.*

Won't you have a cup?

Miles. No!

[*Low whistle off, R.*

(*Aside.*) That is one of the men. Surely, he will not come here!

Helen. What has occurred? You appear quite uneasy.

Miles. I wish you would put up that pistol.

Helen. Not until papa comes.

[*Low whistle off, R. Miles very uneasy. Helen backs toward bridge.*

Miles. Where are you going?

Helen. To look for papa.

Miles. (*Savagely.*) Then, go!

[Turns back to her and walks to extreme, R. and looks off. Helen dodges behind tent, L. Miles turns and looks for her.]

Gone to find papa. Let her go! Bar-
doan won't believe her. He thinks,
I am the only man in the country.
I don't believe she noticed that whistle.
She could hardly distinguish it from the
call of a bird. It may be Jack.

[Gives low bird-like whistle.]

Enter Jack Higgins cautiously,

R.

Jack. I've found you at last.

Miles. You knew, I was on the creek.

Jack. Yes, but I had to locate you.
I couldn't come here and ask for you.

Miles. Certainly not!

Jack. Any one around?

Miles. No—but some one may come
any moment.

Jack. The horses are all up in the
stockade.

Miles. Are they all Bardoan's?

Jack. Everyone of them. The gen-
tlest and best of his bunch. Even his
pet is among them.

Miles. How many, in all?

Jack. Eleven.

Miles. You got my word, to pull for
Wyoming to-night?

Jack. Yes.

Miles. I'll put up some excuse to get away from here, and come over to the stockade just about dark. Who have you with you?

Jack. Mexican Pete.

Miles. He'll do.

Jack. Have you any money?

Miles. Yes. Here's a hundred.

[Gives Jack money.]

Jack. Got any whisky?

Miles. Yes, four quart bottles. They are cached behind that white rock yonder.

[Points to off, R.]

But, Jack, a man needs a clear head in business of this kind. I know you never drink to excess when on duty. But with Pete it is whisky first, and duty afterwards. You will have to give it to him in nips.

Jack. I'll hold the rope on Pete. We'll expect you about dark.

Miles. I will be there, unless something unusual detains me. If I fail to come, that is certain evidence that you should move.

Jack. I understand. Come, get me the whisky.

[Exeunt Jack and Miles, R. Helen steals forth from behind tent.]

Helen. I heard them say something

about horses—Bardoan's horses—and an old stockade—then the command to move on into Wyoming to-night. There can be no delay! I suspicion horse thieves. Can it be the good citizen, the influential banker, Miles Corson, is the accomplice of horse thieves! His words and actions before I left him were strange and alarming. My father trusts and believes in him greatly. So he does in most anyone until he is imposed upon or robbed. That is his weakness. Poor, kind, Robert Bardoan!

[Dodges behind tent, L.]

Enter Miles Corson, R.

Miles. I'll start the horses in the stockade for Wyoming to-night, and then assist Bardoan to find the bunch, the boys bring up from below to-morrow. This will put me in high favor with him. I was a little too aggressive with Helen. But I must have her and will have her in spite of herself. I'll smooth the matter over with her father. He will believe me. He is easy as an old shoe. I will go and hunt him up.

[Exit, L.]

Helen steals forth right of tent. She hurries cautiously across to R. Looks off right earnestly and searchingly.

Helen. I see the burly, hard-faced man—he is just mounting his horse. He will have to ride slow through the timber. I must find out who and what this friend of Corson's is. I will follow him, danger or no danger.

[*Moves off. R. shadowing Jack. Revolver in hand.*]

Enter Kate from R. over bridge.

Kate. I didn't find her. I'll wash up the dishes, and then start out and take another look.

[*Busies herself with dishes.*]

Enter Robert Bardoan from L. over bridge.

Robert. Is Helen here?

Kate. No, Robert.

Robert. I can find no trace of her. She may be lost.

Kate. May'be she has found a good fishing place, and hates to leave it.

Robert. I am worried about her. Has Corson been in since I left?

Kate. No, sir,—not that I know of.

Robert. Where are Sophronia and Willie?

Kate. Off sparking somewhere, I suppose.

Enter Sophronia and Willie from R. over bridge, Sophronia leading Willie.

Sophronia. We didn't find Helen.

Willie. Sophronia, you did not try.

Sophronia. We searched everywhere,
Robert.

Willie. Oh, pickles! she hasn't done a thing but hug me.

Sophronia. Now, Willie Wym!

Willie. It's just terrible.

Robert. Come, Kate, we'll try the south side of the creek.

Kate. We'll find her this time.

Robert. Willie, there are a couple of pistols in the tent. You will have to look out for Sophronia and yourself for awhile.

Willie. I never shot a pistol in my life.

Sophronia. I have.

[Rushes into tent. Comes out flourishing pistols.]

If any vile man—

Willie. Put up those pistols. They might go off and scare the birdies.

Sophronia. Now I can defend myself.

Willie. (*Aside.*) I wish I could defend myself against her.

Robert. I wish I had brought Skip. The wagon horses are too heavy for

saddle work in the timber. Are you ready, Kate?

Kate. Yes, Robert.

Willie. Are you going to leave me?

Kate. Are you afraid, Willie?

Willie. No, but I want to go with you.

Kate. And lave Sophronia? A bear might come and hug her to death.

Willie. She would die happy.

Sophronia. You horrid boy!

Willie. Please let me go, Katy.

Kate. No, ye'll have to stay and protect Sophronia.

Sophronia. I'll not stay alone.

Willie. Let me go, and let Robert stay and protect Sophronia. He can protect her better than I can.

Robert. (*Quickly.*) Come, Kate, we have no time to lose.

[*Exeunt Robert and Kate, R.*]

Sophronia. (*Tragically.*) At last, we are alone.

Willie. I wish you would n't flourish those pistols in that frightful manner.

Sophronia. Willie, I am rich. I came to this country seeking investment for my money. Mr. Corson has placed several thousand dollars for me in excellent loans.

Willie. You have told me all this before. Why do you tell it to me again?

Sophronia. Because I love you, Willie, and want you to share my fortune with me.

[Lays pistols on table.]

Willie. (*Aside.*) I'm a goner! I see the posies growing on my little grave.

Sophronia. Come, share my fortune with me.

Willie. Are you proposing to me?

Sophronia. Yes, sweetness, this is leapyear.

[Rushes to him and throws arms around his neck.]

How I love you!

Willie. How dare you!

Sophronia. Love knows no restraint.

Willie. (*Helplessly.*) I wish it did. Don't! you'll bend my neck and make it crooked.

[Breaks from her and crosses to, R.] Stay where you are—let me think a moment. (*Aside.*) She has a hundred thousand dollars: and she says, she will share it with me. It is a hard way to make money, but it is the best I can do. (*Aloud*) Sophronia, you may kiss me.

Sophronia. (*Rushing to him.*) Oh, rapture!

Willie. (*Aside.*) Whew! chewing-gum—spearmint—digestion.

Sophronia. Just one more, love.

[Starts to kiss him.]

Enter Miles Corson, L.

Miles. (*Aside.*) The old fool! (*Aloud.*) Where is Bardoan?

[*Sophronia screams and releases Willie.*

Where is Kate?

Sophronia. How you startled me. I thought it was a bear.

Willie. And she couldn't bear it.

[*Gives his little laugh.*

Sophronia. Mr. Bardoan and Kate have gone up the south side of the creek in search of Miss Helen.

Miles. (*With excitement.*) In search of Helen! Why, Helen went—no—can it be—possibly—(*Aside.*) The stockade is back from the south side of the creek about a mile up. What if Bardoan and Kate should wander there. I must be with them to warn the boys and play my card. (*Aloud.*) I hope I can find them.

Willie. If you think you can't, you stay with Sophronia, and let me go.

Miles. Not this time.

[*Exit hurriedly, R.*

Sophronia. That man acts like he had lost his mind.

Willie. Most men do when trailing a woman.

Sophronia. (*Pinching him.*) You cute,

little thing!

Willie. You said, I was to have half of your fortune?

Sophronia. Yes, deary—fifty thousand.

Willie. (*Resignedly.*) I do not believe, I can resist you any longer.

Sophronia. I knew you could not resist my love, dewdrop.

Willie. No fellow could, unless he was armed.

Sophronia. Now, Willie!

Willie. When do I get the money?

Sophronia. The day we are married, and go on our honeymoon.

Willie. I accept you, Sophronia. But after this, I'll do the hugging.

[*Grabs her and hugs her.*]

(*Aside.*) What can't a brave man do, when he makes up his mind!

Sophronia. You don't know how happy you make me, Willie!

Willie. You couldn't give me a check for a thousand to-day, could you?

Sophronia. No, my love, not until we are married.

Willie. I ought to have something in advance.

Sophronia. You have me, birdie.

Willie. Yes,—(*Desperately.*) but I want money.

[*Picks up pistols.*]

Sophronia. Why, Willie, what are you going to do?

Willie. Hunt for Helen.

Sophronia. I shall go with you.

Willie. (*Flourishing pistols.*) No. Positively, No.

Sophronia. You terrible man!

Willie. I am simply awful when I am all roused up. Once when I was like that I killed a eleven live cats—

Sophronia. You did!

Willie. Yes, I dropped them into a pail of cold water.

[*Gives his little laugh.*]

Sophronia. Willie Wym!

Willie. Well, I'm going.

Sophronia. I shall go, too.

Willie. Then, come on.

[*Going.*]

Sophronia. What if we should get lost?

Willie. I am lost already.

Sophronia. Let us go back to Boston.

Willie. We must get out of the woods first.

Sophronia. Oh, why did I come!

Willie. I told you, not to.

Sophronia. Poor, trusting, woman!

Willie. Yes, she'll trust you with everything but her money.

Sophronia. Oh, Willie!

Willie. Well, I'm going.

[*Going.*

Sophronia. Are you not afraid?

Willie. I am not afraid of anything
since I consented to marry you.

Sophronia. Then we will go.

[*Takes Willie by left ear.*

Willie. Sophronia, you are just awful!

[*Sophronia leads him off, R.
by ear.*

DROP-CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE. *The old stockade. An open park in the mountains surrounded by low mountain peaks heavily timbered with spruce and pine. Log wall of stockade across stage, rear. Heavy wooden gates in center of stockade wall. Saddles, bridles, and lariats, lying left of gate. Old, low, log-cabin, L. Log and large rock, R.*

Enter Hal Halpin, L.U.E. He is in full cowboy costume and trappings.

Hal. I thought, I was on the right road to Sundance. I've rode all night and part of a day since I got off the wide trail, and here I am way up in the mountains somewhere. Just where, I am not quite clear in my understanding. I guess, I'm lost. I may have to ride around for a few days, but I'll make civilization finally. I wonder how it will seem to get back again, where one can see people all the time, and hear the sweet voice of a woman once in awhile. It was a long, hard, ride, but there was no other way out of the sagebrush. No

more Wyoming for me. I am dead sick of the range. As soon as I reach a railroad town, I'll sell my outfit, and make for the old home down in Iowa. I have a thousand dollars in cash and other valuable paper in my belt, and if I ever get out of this country with it still there, I'll stay out. But it is pleasant up here in the mountains. The smell of pines and the cool air braces a fellow up. I took a big drink at a clear mountain spring below, and it sure freshened me up. Pony spread his nostrils when he poked his nose into it. Everything is very quiet here.

[Looks around. Goes to stockade gate and looks in.]

(Advancing.) This is the old stockade. I have heard of it down on the range. It was built by some early prospectors. I know where I am now. It is a queer place for a corral. And here is a cabin. I wonder if there is anything to eat in that cabin. I haven't had anything to eat since yesterday noon. I am about as hungry as a fellow ever gets, before starving. Don't see anybody around. Guess, I'll have to help myself, and apologise afterwards, if anyone comes. *(Yawns.)* I am awful sleepy. If there is a bunk in that cabin, I'll borrow that too.

[Exits into cabin closing door behind him.]

*Enter Mexican Pete L.U.E.
Looks cautiously about before
advancing.*

Pete. All quiet here.

*[Goes to stockade and looks in
Advances to rock, R.]*

Horse all right. Up all night, and to ride all day makes me to want sleep. I'll take a nap by this old rock.

[Drops down, back against rock.]
If I had some whisky—

*[Pulls hat down over eyes and
dozes.]*

*Enter Jack Higgins L. U. E.
Has small sack on back. Looks
cautiously about advancing to
Pete.*

Jack. *(In low voice.)* Pete.

Pete. *(Rousing up.)* What gets the matter now?

Jack. I thought I saw some one.

Pete. May'be me. I was to corral.

Jack. It might have been you.

Pete. Did you see Corson?

Jack. Yes, I saw him.

Pete. Get any money?

Jack. Yes, a hundred dollars.

Pete. (*Rising to feet.*) Any whisky?

Jack. Yes, plenty for the trip.

Pete. Gi'me some.

Jack. Not here. Corson is coming over.

Pete. When is he to come?

Jack. Shortly before dark.

Pete. Want drink bad!

Jack. Come, we will go over to the dog-tent in the draw.

Pete. Gi'me drink!

Jack. When we get over in the draw.

Pete. Caramba!

Jack. I never like to be around the horses in the daytime. Some fool might come along and—

Pete. Kill the fool!

Jack. We don't want to do any killing until we have to. Killing is bad business. They hang men for killing, any old time.

Pete. For horse stealing, too.

Jack. Yes, in this country. That's what makes this careful business.

Pete. (*In louder voice.*) Gi'me to drink.

Jack. Hush! Come along!

[*Going.*]

Pete. Whisky you got in bag?

Jack. Yes, in the bag.

Pete. How much?

Jack. Never mind! I'll give you a

drink as soon as we get to the tent.

Pete. All right.

Jack. Hark! I thought I heard some one snoring.

Pete. One o' the horses blowing.

Jack. Well, come on.

[Exeunt Jack and Pete, R.U.E.]

Enter Helen Bardoan L.U.E.

revolver in hand. Looks cautiously around, advancing.

Helen. Here is the old stockade.

[Enters stockade. Comes out, closing gate behind her. Advances, looking around cautiously.]

Yes, they are all papa's horses I counted eleven. Skip is among them. This is a very dangerous place. No girl but one brought up on the range would dare do as I have done.

Enter Pete and Jack, R.U.E. stealthily.

[They rush upon Helen. Pete thrusts up her pistol hand and pistol goes off. Jack wrenches pistol out of her hand, dropping it on stage. She screams. Hal rushes from cabin bare-headed with pistol in hand.]

Pete. We're caught!

Jack. Hold the girl in front of us.

[Jack fires at Hal. Hal ducks, dodging bullet. Pete holds Helen in front of him and Jack, backing to right. As soon as they reach extreme R. Pete gives Helen a push towards Hal, and Jack and Pete dash off stage, R. Helen rushes into Hal's arms. He swings her around behind him, and fires at retreating horse thieves.]

Helen. Oh, save me!

Hal. You are saved, sweetheart. They have hit the high places. They have skipped.

Helen. Where did you come from?

Hal. I was asleep in the cabin.

Helen. In that cabin?

Hal. Yes, that cabin. But I heard the shot and your scream, and it woke me up in a hurry.

Helen. Do you stay here?

Hal. No, I am from Wyoming.

Helen. What is your name?

Hal. Hal Halpin.

Helen. Are you a horse thief?

Hal. Well, no. I have only one horse, and I'll sell him as soon as I get to a railroad town.

Helen. But you were here, and asleep in that cabin.

Hal. Yes, I was asleep in that cabin—mighty dead, sound asleep.

Helen. There are eleven of my father's horses in that stockade. They were brought by unknown men from my father's range down on Elk creek, fifty or sixty miles below here.

Hal. It struck me, this was a queer place for a corral.

Helen. I hope and pray, I am not deceived in you. You have saved me from those evil men, and for that I feel a gratitude that prompts me to both hope and pray, you are not a horse thief.

Hal. Why, bless you, I am a cowboy.

Helen. How came you here?

Hal. I was on my way to Sundance, but somehow got off the trail last night. After a long ride, I arrived here tired and hungry. I found something to eat in that cabin, and after eating what I found, dropped into one of the old bunks and went to sleep. This is the whole story.

Helen. My name is Helen Barboan.

[Extends hand.

Here is my hand.

[He takes her hand.

You defend a woman, and that speaks for your honor and manhood

Hal. (*Holding her hand.*) It was a woman who watched over me, cared for me, and nourished me with her life's blood in the most helpless period of my existence. Why shouldn't I defend a woman?

[*Releases her hand.*

Helen. I am convinced. I trust you. I am deeply thankful to the providence that guided you to this meeting.

Hal. Indeed, I am too, for I haven't seen the sweet face of a woman for a whole long year.

[*Sees revolver. Picks it up.*
They left a six-shooter.

Helen. It is mine.

[*He gives revolver to her.*
It was wrenched from me in my struggle.

[*Thrusts pistol in belt.*

Hal. I fear we will need all the pistols and ammunition we have. This is a robber's den; the secluded retreat of a band of desperate horse thieves.

[*Helen crowds close to him. He puts arm around her.*

Fear not! I will defend you with my life.

Helen. What had we better do?

Hal. We better pull out of here, and be quick about it. Hark! what was that? Sh-h-h!—above the cabin—listen.

[*Helen draws pistol*

It may be another of the gang. Come!

*[They hurry noiselessly off L.
around lower end of cabin.]*

*Enter Miles Corson, L.U.E.
Advances cautiously looking
around.*

Miles. Everything quiet. The boys
cannot be far away.

[Gives low whistle.]

Enter Jack and Pete, R. cautiously.

Jack. Talk low.

Miles. What's the matter?

Pete. We're spotted.

Miles. What has happened?

Jack. Bardoan's daughter was here
with a strange cowboy. He drove us off
with a gun.

Miles. Both of you?

Pete. Yes, both of us. He is all the
time know what he is to do next. He is
onto his job.

Jack. Did you see him dodge that
bullet, Pete?

Pete. He's dam' quick.

Miles. Who is he?

Pete. He may be the devil for all I
know who he is. This whole business,
fool business. When it is to gather
horses no use to have people all around

to catching fish. Bah!

Miles. It seems like two ought to have been able to hold up one cowboy.

Pete. He's too quick.

Miles. We must get the horses away from here. As for that cowboy, I'll undertake to round him up, myself. Who's horse is that yonder?

[Points to L.U.E.]

Jack. It must be his—the cowboy's.

Miles. It is his, hey? Well, I'll wait for him. And I'll get him.

Jack. Well, something must be done, and done quickly.

Miles. That's right, Jack. But we'll wait awhile for Mr. Cowboy.

Pete. Better pull for Wyoming,

Jack. I tell you, Corson, you don't want that girl or that cowboy to see you with us. If they do, it'll be all off with you in town.

Miles. Oh, well, I'll fix that.

[Smiles sneeringly.]

I will tell them, I was held up and captured by the horse thieves. They will believe me. I have the money. And the people in town, you know, worship the golden calf.

Pete. (Surlily.) Or the golden jackass.

Miles. What's the matter with you?

Pete. Fool business—whole thing.

Miles. We must get that cowboy

And when we do, put him where only the pines will whisper of his whereabouts. He is a cowboy and won't give up his horse. He is pretty sure to sneak back after it before going with Bardoan's daughter to camp. He has tied his horse to a tree and he'll come—

Pete. And Bardoan with him.

Miles. I tell you, Pete, he'll take a long chance for his horse. He'll surmise, that having been discovered, you will start out with the horses at once, and take his along.

Jack. He may be hiding around here now.

Pete. He may be in the cabin.

[*All draw pistols.*]

Miles. We better get out of sight. We will watch awhile, and if he doesn't put in an appearance, you can start out with the horses. But I am sure he will take a chance.

Pete. He's that kind.

Miles. But, Jack, the girl—are you sure it was Bardoan's daughter?

Jack. It was Helen Bardoan.

Miles. I must get that cowboy! Jack, you go to the south side of the corral.

[*Exit Jack, R.U.E.*]

Pete, you come with me.

[*Exeunt Miles and Pete, L.U.E.*]

A pause—

Enter Hal and Helen with raised pistols, cautiously, L.—below cabin. They talk in low voice.

Hal. I thought, I heard voices.

Helen. It is very quiet.

Hal. Now is my only chance. My hat is in the cabin, and my horse on the north side of the stockade. Stay right here while I make a dash for my hat.

[Raises pistol, steals into cabin, gets hat and returns to Helen.]

I've got the hat. Now to get the horse. Perhaps, I ought not try that. It might be better we went to the camp at once and notified your father of what we have discovered.

Helen. Papa's pet saddle-horse, Skip, is in the stockade. We must get him and take him with us. There is no one around.

Hal. We better keep away from that corral.

Helen. The horse thieves will start for Wyoming as soon as they recover from their fright, and take Skip with them. It will take two hours, at the least, to find our camp and return. By that time the thieves will have vanished with the horses, and night coming on. We cannot trail them in the dark.

Papa could not bear to lose Skip.

Hal. I don't like to lose Pony.

Helen. There is a saddle and bridle at the stockade gate. We can get Skip; bridle and saddle him; throw open the gates; let the horses out, and away.

Hal. It sounds good, and I would go in after your father's pet were it not for you. I am afraid to leave you alone a moment. The horse thieves may be hiding, and watching for our return.

Helen. You got your hat. If the horse thieves had been watching, they would have rushed forth, or fired upon you. You stand at the stockade gate, and I will go in and get Skip.

Hal. No, they may be hiding behind the stockade, and shoot you through a crevice in the rotting wall.

Helen. I must have Skip.

Hal. If I go into the corral and leave you outside, they may capture you and shoot me through a crevice in the wall. The wall would protect them from my fire. If we both go into the corral, so much the worse. If they are watching, or should come, we would be in a trap. Out here in the open, we can move and fight.

Helen. (*Desperately.*) Can't we do something?

Hal. Yes. I can open the gate and

let the horses out. And really, I think that is the proper thing to do. The horses, most of them, will go back to their own range, providing the thieves do not round them up again before they get out of the timber.

Helen. (*Persistently.*) They will move the horses as soon as we leave.

Hal. I tell you, my girl, the further we keep away from that corral, and the quicker we get out of here, the better it will be for you—the better for me. We must not separate. Whether I guard the gate and you go in, or you guard the gate and I go in, the risk is the same. If we keep away from that corral, the horse thieves will keep away from us. They want the horses. To move toward that corral is to provoke attack.

Helen. I will stand at the gate with my pistol while you go in, slip the bridle on Skip and lead him out. We will then throw the saddle on Skip; open the gate and let the horses out; pick up your horse, and strike for camp. I will ride Skip. The other horses will follow him. You can follow and guard our retreat.

Hal. I fear it cannot be done with safety. In fact, I am sure it can't.

Helen. Come, I will point Skip out

to you. He has a heavy forelock and a single white spot on his breast. Come.

[*Hal hesitates.*

It will break papa's heart to lose Skip.

Hal. Better lose Skip than lose you.

Helen. (*Aside.*) It cannot be possible, that such a manly fellow is one of the horse thieves, and wants to hold Skip! (*To Hal.*) Let me tell you, my friend, I am a frontier girl, and not afraid of a little mix-up. If any of those sneaking cowards should come while I guard the gate, the report of my pistol will tell you there is one less. I never waste a cartridge. My bead is death.

Hal. By George, girly. you got the nerve! I'll do as you say. But it's risky—risky. I hope you will be able to plunk them. If you don't, we're gone. Say,—won't you let me kiss your hand, before I go?

[*Helen puts up her mouth.*

He kisses her.

Helen. That is for Skip. I never was so bold in my life before. But I can, at least, give you a kiss for what you have done for me, and what you are going to do for papa.

Hal. I'd go into that corral now, if old death stood at the gate rattling his bones. Well, here we go for Skip. Keep your eyes open, and your pistol

ready.

[*Hal and Helen move cautiously to stockade gate. Hal partly opens gate. Helen points to object inside. Hal enters stockade edging through gate. Helen closes gate and stands watchfully and guardedly, with pistol raised. Low whistle off, R. Helen startled, gazes intently at R. Enter Pete, L.U.E. sneaking along stockade wall, hat down over eyes. Seizes Helen from behind, left hand over her mouth, his right grasping her pistol arm. Pistol goes off. Jack runs on, R.U.E. Wrenches pistol out of Helen's hand. Bars gate. Pete and Jack drag Helen off, R. Hal, pistol in hand, and without hat, appears on wall over stockade gate. Enter Miles Corson, L.U.E. crouching close to stockade wall, pistol in hand. Hal jumps to stage, falling and throwing pistol. Miles picks up club near gate and strikes*

Hal on head with it. Hal drops and rolls over on back unconscious. Miles picks up lariat and binds Hal hand and foot.

Miles. The maverick is roped!

[Drags Hal into cabin. Closes door and secures it, taking key from above door and replacing it.

Helen is in my power at last! And the boys will finish the maverick. Dead men tell no tales!

[Picks up Hal's pistol. Gives low whistle.

DROP-CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE 1. *The old stockade. Same as in act second.*

*Helen discovered seated on log,
R. Her limbs are bound and
her hands tied behind her.*

Helen. Oh, why was I so rash! But I must be brave. If my friend has escaped, he will surely come to my rescue.

Enter Jack and Pete from stockade. Pete in first stage of intoxication.

Pete. Give me to drink one more.

Jack. Not another drop. You have had more than you ought to have already.

Pete. Just one more.

Jack. Not a drop!

[Pete draws pistol and goes to cabin door.]

Jack. What are you going to do now?

Pete. Shoot him. Boss is to give me hundred dollars. I want money. I want whisky.

[Helen alarmed.]

Jack. Nonsense!

Helen. *(Aside.)* He has not escaped!

He is a prisoner and in that cabin. All hope is gone.

Jack. Come away from that cabin. Wait till we start.

Pete. Maybe better.

[Puts up pistol.]

Jack. I'll go and get a bunch of the horses ready.

[Picks up bridle and goes into stockade, closing gate behind him. Pete advances to Helen.]

Pete. Hello! little wildcat, how you get 'long? Come to kiss pretty seniorita. Seniorita say, no; senior me say, yes.

[Throws arm about Helen. Helen screams. Jack Higgins comes from stockade on the run.]

Jack. What are you doing, you drunken brute!

[Hurls Pete to C.]

Let me be what I may, I am still a man; and I am going to see, that this girl is treated like a decent woman. Now you keep away from her.

Pete. No whisky! No girl! Maybe you too smart, Big Jack. Maybe you want girl for yourself?

Jack. *(Advancing to Pete.)* Look here, Pete, we're going to have no more fooling. You've had too much whisky. Take your horse and go over in the draw and get the dog-tent and coffee-

pot.

Pete. Dam' dog-tent! Dam' coffee-pot! Go yourself.

Jack. I've told you what to do. Now go and do it.

[Pushes Pete roughly.]

Pete. You push me! I settle you.

[Draws pistol quickly and shoots Jack. Jack staggers, falls C. and dies. Helen sinks down on log.]

He's think he's too smart. Get some whisky now.

[Takes bottle from Jack's pocket and takes long drink.]

Horse go to h—l! Corson go to h—l! Jack gone to h—l. More whisky at gate in sack. To drink now I have plenty.

[Drinks. Puts bottle in pocket. Draws knife and approaches Helen.]

Just to cut rope.

[Cuts rope that binds Helen's limbs. Slips rope through Helen's belt and holds ends. She resists slightly. He threatens her with knife.]

Come.

[Pulls her to feet by rope.]

Helen. (Aside.) I am lost. I will force him to kill me.

[Pulls her by rope. She resists—holds back.]

Pete. (Roughly.) Count three—not

come—shoot.

[Puts knife in belt and draws pistol.]

One—two—

[Helen follows. He leads her by rope.]

Muy bueno! Better to live. Not so good to die. Come!

[Leads Helen to stockade gate; gets sack containing bottles, and leads her off stage, R.U.E.]

Enter Miles Corson, L.U.E.

Miles. I heard a pistol shot. They may be making an early start.

[Sees Jack's body]

What's this! It is Higgins!

[Examines body.]

Shot dead! What has happened!

[Runs to stockade, looks in, and then advances.]

The horses are all in the stockade.

[Looks into cabin window.]

The prisoner is still in the cabin. Can it be—Yes, I understand it all—Pete has shot Jack to get the whisky.

[Hurries to R., and looks off.]

Pete drunk and Helen with him! My nerve is beginning to forsake me. The ice-cold hand of a horrible crime clutches at my heart. The only thing for me to do now is to extricate myself. I will turn the horses loose.

[Starts for stockade.

*Enter Robert Bardoan and
Kate O'Brian, L.U.E. Robert
has rifle.*

Robert. Hello, Corson! You looking
for Helen, too?

[Sees Jack's body.

-Is that man dead?

[Examines Jack's body.

Who shot this man?

Miles. I did. He is a horse thief.
The other is bound and in the cabin.
In that stockade are eleven of your
horses. Go look for yourself.

*[Robert hurries to stockade and
looks in. Whinny of horse heard.
Returns to Miles and Kate.*

Robert. You are right, Corson. Those
are my horses. Skip recognized me
with a whinny as soon as I looked in.
You have done good work, Corson. You
are a man of courage and quick action.

Kate. Have you seen Helen?

Miles. I have not. I fear something
has happened to her. She may have
fallen into the hands of the horse
thieves. There may be more of them.

Robert. We will make short work of
them, if we find them. Let me see the
scoundrel you have in the cabin.

Miles. Yes, we will take a look at him. I don't think I killed him. I knocked him down at the gate with a heavy popple stick

[Goes to cabin. Robert and Kate follow him. He gets key quickly from above cabin door. Unlocks and opens door.]

Kate. *(Aside.)* By hivins! he knows where they kape the kay.

[Miles enters cabin and drags Hal out. Hal's face is covered with blood.]

Miles. Here is the horse thief in his war paint.

Kate. Wait! I'll get some water and wash the blood off of his face. There may be some water in the cabin.

[Exit into cabin.]

Robert. Young man, yon'll have to give a very honorable account of yourself, or there will be something doing.

Hal. Who are you?

Robert. I am Robert Bardoan, the owner of those horses in that stockade corral. They are all mine.

Hal. I don't care whose horses they are. If they are yours, I am glad you have found them.

[Enter Kate from cabin with an old towel and tin can of water.]

Kate. Here is the water and a towel.

The towel 's not the clanest, but it's the bist they have in this robber's roost. Come, let me wash the blood from his face, and sai if he looks like a harse thaif.

{Washes blood from Hal's face and head.

(*To Hal.*) Your head is badly skinned. That was a hard rap his nibbs gave you.

{Dries Hal's face wltth towel.

(*Aside.*) He's a foine lookin' young man. My woman's instinct tells me, he's no harse thaif. Its my first impression, and I'll stay by it.

Hal. That rope on my limbs has cut into the flesh. It hurts me unmerci-fully.

Robert. You might as well get used to it. There may be more of it for you.

Hal. No matter, only take off this one.

Kate. Take it off, Robert. He's in awful misery with it.

Robert. Take it off, Corson, and let him stand up. He'll not get away. I will see to that.

[Miles removes rope from Hal's limbs. After considerable effort, Hal rises to his feet. Gives Mile's a tremendous kick that sends him rolling to front of stage.]

Hal. That's what I've been waiting for all the afternoon.

Kate. (*Aside.*) If he had the rope off of his airms he'd clane up the bunch. He's a darling!

[*Miles scrambles to his feet; draws pistol, and starts toward Hal.*

Kate steps in front of Hal.

(*Aloud.*) Not yet, Mr. Corson.

[*Bardoan raises rifle.*

Mr. Bardoan, kape that rifle o' yours quiet. There may be a mistake. This may not be a harse thief.

Miles. He certainly is.

Hal. And you are certainly a liar.

Kate. Put up that pistol, Mr. Corson, until you know more about this young man.

Hal. Where is Miss Bardoan?

Robert. Why do you ask?

Hal. She was with me at the corral.

Robert. With you!

Hal. Yes, sir, with me. If she is not here, you better release my hands, and let me go in search of her.

[*Sees Jack's body*
Dead! That is one of them. She is at the mercy of the other. Bardoan, if you love your daughter, and would save her from a horrible fate, take that rope off my hands.

Miles. The scoundrel is trying to

deceive you, Bardoan. He is here; the horses are here; and, perhaps, your daughter is lying dead somewhere, the victim of his vile assault.

Robert. (*Peremptorily.*) Stand back, Kate.—You better go to the corral and look the horses over. There may be some of yours among them.

[*Kate steps back reluctantly.*
Young man, your time has come. If you have anything to say, you better say it now.

[*Raises rifle.*

Hal. Are you going to shoot me, sir?

Robert. Yes, I am going to shoot you.

Hal. Let me step back from you. I am too close. You will fill my face with powder.

[*Backs toward upper end of cabin and stops.*

Please let this good young woman loosen the clothes around my neck. Your shot may not kill me outright. I would like to have my neck free in my death struggle—while I am dying.

Robert. Do as he requests, Kate.

[*Kate goes up in front of Hal, between him and Bardoan. Loosens Hal's shirt collar. While she is doing this, Hal backs little by little above upper end of cabin. Kate*

raises her face as if to speak to him. He kisses her. She gives a slight scream, turns and faces Bardoun. Hal gives a spring and passes off stage around upper end of cabin. Robert and Miles start for him. Kate screams and clings to Miles, pushing him in front of and against Bardoun.

Kate. No use! No use! He's gone! He's gone!

Miles. Let go of me!

Kate. No use! He's gone.

Miles. What the devil 's the matter with you? Let go of me! He will escape.

Kate. He has escaped.

Miles. (*Breaking from Kate.*) I'll get him!

Kate. Ye might as well hunt for a chipmunk in a brush pile.

Miles. (*Aside.*) 'The Irish hussy has helped him to escape.

Robert. Did the thief hurt you, Kate?

Kate. No, he didn't *hurt* me.

Robert. What did he do to you?

Kate. (*Boldly.*) He kissed me for his mother.

SCENE 2. *In the pines.*

Enter Sophronia and Willie, L.

Willie has pistols.

Sophronia. Willie, we are lost. What

shall we do?

Willie. Don't ask me. My wheel has stopped.

Sophronia. Can't you find the way?

Willie. Maybe if you would give me that check, I might find the way to the bank.

Sophronia. Silly boy! Don't you know night is coming on, and that this dreadful forest is full of wild animals? What if a bear—

[*Crash as of breaking brush off, R.*
There is some wild creature now.

Willie. (*Sinking into Sophronia's arms.*) Save me!

Enter Hal on the run, R.

Hands tied behind him.

Hal. Thank God!

Willie. (*Reviving.*) That's what I say, if you know the country.

Hal. Well, what I don't know I'll guess at.

Willie. We are lost.

Sophronia. Lost but found! You dear, young man!

[*Embraces Hal.*

How can we repay you!

Hal. By untying my hands.

Sophronia. Who tied them?

Hal. A horse thief.

Sophronia. A horse thief!

Hal. Come, release me.

[*Sophronia with considerable effort releases Hal's hands.*]

Good! I am free again.

Willie. Are you a cowboy?

Hal. Yes, a cowboy. What do you do for a living?

Willie. I sell millinery goods for a Boston house.

Hal. (*Smiling.*) I thought so. What brought you people here anyway?

Willie. We came up after trout. Sophronia caught a sucker.

Hal. Are you with the Bardoans?

Sophronia. Yes, and we are looking for Helen.

Hal. I am too. Young gentleman, I'll trouble you for those pistols.

Willie. Take them and welcome. They have troubled me ever since I took them from Sophronia.

[*Gives Hal pistols.*]

Hal. Any ammunition?

Willie. Do you take me for a walking arsenal?

[*Hal smiles.*]

Hal. (*Aside.*) Queer combination!

[*Examines pistols.*]

Both loaded. It is a wonder they didn't go off and kill one or the other of them. The horse thieves appeared to come from some place south of the corral.

I'll strike for that part of the compass.

[Starts toward R.]

Sophronia. *(With alarm.)* You are not going to leave us?

Hal. Come—we must hurry.

[They hurry off, R.]

SCENE 3. *A small open ravine—the draw. Dog-tent, L. Burnt out fire R. with coffee-pot hanging on cross stick.*

Enter Pete with sack on shoulder L. leading Helen by rope.

He is very drunk.

Pete. Here's zhe tent and zhe coffee-pot.

Helen. Oh, be merciful!

Pete. Nozzhin—love you—zhas all.

Helen. If you love me, release my hands.

Pete. O-o-o'h, no! You too quick.

Helen. The most hardened of men are kind and good to the woman they love.

Pete. Dhaz zho. But zhey don't let zhem get away.

Helen. Release me and my father will give you all the horses in the stockade, and say no more about it.

Pete. Horse, no! Hic! Want girl. Got her—hic—keep her.

[Drops sack down near tree, C.]
Make zhome cof-fee—hic—drink zhome

coffee—feel better.

[Ties Helen to tree, C. Takes coffee-pot from cross stick and looks into it.

Muzh go to spring and get—hic—zhome wazhab. (To Helen.) Not try to get away—no uszhe.

[Exit, R. with coffee-pot.

Helen. How dark the world looks to me now. The horror of my situation seems to smother me. I cannot kill myself—I—

Enter Hal, L.L.E. Motions to Helen to be silent. Releases her. She grasps his arm, buries her head in his shoulder and weeps.

Hal. (Gently.) Don't cry! Come, we must not delay. He may leave before we get to the stockade.

Helen. He is at the spring.

Hal. Not him. I mean the other villain. The one that scattered my dice.

Helen. Scattered your dice!

Hal. Yes, rapped me on the head.

Helen. Oh!

Hal. I must settle with that gentleman.

Helen. Do you mean Corson?

Hal. That's the name.

Helen. Why, he is one of the horse

thieves.

Hal. I suspicioned as much. But we must make for the stockade. I don't want any pistol play with this fellow here at present. I probably would wing him, but his shot might catch you or drop me; then everything would be in bad shape again. Your safety first, then to round up the horse thieves.

Helen. He is very drunk.

Hal. He'll probably stay here then until I return. Come!

[Exeunt Hal and Helen, L.U.E.]

Enter Pete, R. with coffee-pot.

Looks around.

Pete. Where zhe girl? Zhe tree izh here, but zhe girl zhe izh gone.

[Staggers off, R. with coffee-pot.]

*Enter Sophronia Simpson,
L.L.E.*

Sophronia. Where is the dear young man! He is so handsome! I can hardly bear to be away from him a moment. I wonder if he has a sweetheart.

*Enter Pete with coffee-pot, R.
Very drunk. Hat down over
eyes.*

Pete. I got zno waz—hic—zha.

Sophronia. There he is now!

[Rushes to Pete and embraces him.]

I have found you at last!

Pete. Oh, well if you love me like zhat—all—all right.

Sophronia. Good gracious! this is not the same man.

[*Pushes up Pete's hat. Screams.*
It is another man—and he is drunk.

Pete. Zhis noszh zhame gir—hic—el.

Sophronia. (*Aside.*) He may be a wealthy rancher. They always get drunk, I hear, when they go fishing. (*To Pete.*) You are not the same man, but still very delightful. Would you like to kiss me?

Pete. Kizh you!—Yesh, if I can make it. Maybe I too drunk.

Sophronia. (*Aside.*) If he kisses me, I'll sue him for breach of promise, and send Willie back to his grandmother.

(*To Pete.*) Kiss me if you want to.

[*Puts up mouth. Pete after many misses and staggers finally kisses her.*

Pete. (*Spits.*) Pah, old mackerel! (*To Sophronia.*) Hōw iszh it to come zhat you change so quick? Where zhe rope?

Sophronia. What rope?

Pete. Zhe rope zhat had you picketed wiszh.

Sophronia. You are drunk and thinking of your horse.

Pete. Horsze—no! Have girl tie fast

zhat tree. Come back—no girl—find old woman. Pah, (*Spits*) old mackerell!

Sophronia. You black whiskered wretch, call me an old woman!

[*Jumps at him and pulls his beard.*

He backs down on fire, falls backward over cross stick spilling contents of coffee-pot over him.

Pete. Caramba!

[*Sophronia picks up rope, throws it over his neck, and holds ends.*

Pulls him to feet by rope. She takes pistol from his belt.

Sophronia. I shall take you to camp and sue you for breach of promise.

[*Leads him off, L.U.E. by rope.*

SCENE 4. *In the pines.*

Enter Sophronia, R. leading

Pete by rope, She has pistol.

Pete. Where you go wizh me?

Sophronia. To camp.

Pete. I don' wan' zh' go to camp.

Sophronia. Where would you like to go?

Pete. To an—hic—nozher state.

Sophronia. You are already in a state of intoxication.

Pete. I wan' to go to Wyoming.

Sophronia. Is Wyoming very far from here?

Pete. Jus' 'cross the line.

Sophronia. Well, you are too drunk to find the line, so I'll take you to camp.

Pete. Diablo!

Sophronia. Come along!

[Leads him off, L.]

SCENE 5. *A spruce opening.*

Enter Hal and Helen, R.

Hal. I begin to think that man, Corson, is the brains of the whole rascality. How fortunate you found him out!

Helen. To you I owe my life and honor.

Hal. I may be a horse thief.

Helen. I fear you have stolen more hearts than horses.

Hal. Have I—pardon me!—Come, there are anxious hearts waiting for you at the stockade.

[Exeunt Hal and Helen, L.U.E.]

Enter Sophronia, R. leading Pete by rope. She has pistol.

Pete. Zhay, are you a wood-chopper?

Sophronia. A wood-chopper, you drunken idiot!

Pete. I zhought you wazh a girl, but you're an old, old woman. *(Spits.)* Mackerel—pah!

Sophronia. If you are a horse thief, I'll have you hung.

Pete. We'll have to build a fire.

Sophronia. You'll find a fire waiting for you at camp.

Pete. Do you know who I am? I'm Megxzhican Pete.

Sophronia. Well, I didn't take you for Peter the Great.

[Drags him towards, L.]

Pete. Hold on, I want to laugh.

Sophronia. Wait till to-morrow.

[Leads him off, L.U.E. by rope.]

DROP-CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE. *The old stockade. Same as in act second. Jack's body removed.*

Robert Bardoan and Kate O'Brian discovered. Robert has rifle.

Robert. I am distracted!

[Walks up and down.]

Kate. I am worried meself.

Robert. My daughter in the power of a vile horse thief!

Kate. Helen is brave and will defend herself

Robert. What to do or where to go I know not.

Kate. The young man 'll find her.

Robert. He's quite handy with himself.

Kate. There's no doubt about that.

Robert. That was a great kick he gave Corson.

Kate. A broncho couldn't do better.

Robert. He's quite handy with his lip, too.

Kate. Indade, he's a handy lad. Maybe his name is Handy Andy.

Robert. Where's Corson.

Kate. In the cabin. He's awful nervous.

Robert. He is worried about Helen.

Enter Miles Corson from cabin.

He is depressed with criminal fear.

Miles. Robert, if you will let me have Skip, I will ride the country over in search of Helen.

Kate. The young man 'll find her; bring her back to her father, and prove himself a hero.

Miles. Stuff!

Kate. Mr. Corson, I never did have any confidence in you. You always appeared to me like an oily snake.

Robert. Kate, what's the matter with you?

Kate. Miles Corson is too anxious to convince you, that that young man is a scoundrel. There's a motive behind it, and one, I'm confident, there is no good in.

Miles. Are you talking about me?

Kate. Sure, I'm not talkin' about the weather. You can hear and understand what I say.

Miles. You are expressing a very offensive opinion.

Kate. In plain English, Miles Corson, do you know what I think of you?

Miles. I never inquired.

Kate. Well, to save you that trouble, I'll tell you. I think you're a dirty, two-faced, desavvin', yankee rascal. And I tell you, Robert Bardoan, if you kape that man for a frind, you'll niver have me for a wife.

Robert. Then I'll have to give him up.

Miles. (*To Bardoan.*) Will you let me have your horse? I will go back to town.

Robert. Kate is an excellent judge of horses, and has a remarkable intuition. You better stay awhile.

Miles. No—I feel that I ought to go.

Robert. (*Firmly.*) You stay here.

Enter Hal and Helen, R.U.E.

Kate. Look! Didn't I tell you! There she is, and there he is.

[*Robert hands rifle to Kate and rushes to Helen.*]

Robert. (*Embracing her.*) My poor, poor, little girl!

Hal. I hope you will pardon me, Mr. Bardoan, for leaving you so abruptly. But here I am. You may now do with me as will.

Robert. What have you to say, my daughter,

Helen. (*Pointing to Hal.*) To that

young man I owe my life and honor. (*Pointing to Miles.*) There stands the leader of the worst gang of horse thieves that ever infested a country.

Miles. There is some mistake. Bar-doan, your daughter is deluded. She always seemed unfavorable to our friendship. Like most women, she is readily moved by a broad chest, and a few grand stand plays. If you want a horse thief for a son in law, take him.

Kate. How do you know he is a horse thief?

Miles. How do you know he is not?
Helen is deluded.

[Draws pistol and crosses to right front.]

Stand back, every one of you. If you shoot, I will shoot. All my shots count. If I go, one of you will go with me.

Robert. Let the young man give an account of himself.

Hal. I have told my story to Miss Bardoan,—how I came here, and how I came to be asleep in that cabin. I have no evidence that Corson is a horse thief, but your daughter's word. My grievance with him is a personal one, which I will settle as soon as the proper moment presents itself.

Miles. Why not now?

[*Raises pistol.*

Hal. Very well. Come.

[*Draws pistol and starts for rear.*

Helen. (*Grasping Hal's arm.*) No, my friend, you might get shot.

Miles. (*Lowering pistol.*) There, Bardoan, is the explanation. She is in love with the horse thief.

Robert. Helen, I do not know what to say—what to think. There must be some mistake. Before we can accuse Mr. Corson, we must have positive evidence. We should not be carried away by feeling and suspicion.

Enter Sophronia, R.U.E. leading Pete by rope. She has pistol. Pete still drunk.

Sophronia. I have captured a man.

Helen. (*Pointing to Pete.*) There is the other horse thief.

Pete. (*Rousing up and snatching pistol from Sophronia.*) Who says I'm a horse thief?

Hal. (*Raising pistol.*) I do.

[*Pete, C.—back.*

Pete. Well, I am.

[*Sophronia runs to Helen and Kate, L.*

Sophronia. I captured a real horse thief.

Pete. Yes, I am a horse thief. But

I am not the only one.

[*Points to Miles.*

Pete. There is the boss of the whole gang—Miles Corson. The fool that brings Bardoan to fish up where is the place we have his horses cached.

Miles. You are drunk.

[*Points to Hal.*

Don't you know that he is one of your gang?

Pete. Know nothing of that kind. That is a strange cowboy. Where the devil he came from to know I do not.

Miles. You traitor! You coward! You liar!

Pete. (*Advancing towards Miles.*) Who's a traitor! Who's a coward! Who's a liar!

Miles. You are, you drunken greaser.

Pete. I know you'll fight, Miles Corson—that I will admit. But you are a horse thief and a hypocrite. I am a horse thief too, but no hypocrite. Now you come on.—Any old thing goes with me.

Miles. (*Aiming pistol at Pete.*) I'll kill you!

[*Works pistol—does not go off.*
My God! I forgot to load the pistol. (*Aside.*) I have only rifle cartridges in my belt.

Pete. What comes to be the matter

with you?

Miles. My pistol is unloaded.

Pete. (*Covering Corson with pistol*)
Then throw up your hands and surrender, and to jail go where you belong to. You're a fool too big to gather horses any more. My head it is clearer now. I see the beautiful daughter of Bardoin whose life to death and ruin I might have made, and the strange lady who captured me when from the liquor I was too much in the intoxication.

Miles. Listen man, whoever you are.

Pete. Don't you know who I am?

{Threatens Miles with pistol.

Miles. Hold!—but a moment, man.

{Throws pistol down on stage.

You see I am unarmed. Surely you will not shoot down an unarmed man for no cause—

Pete. You skunk!

Miles. Be patient man—be patient! I have money, but I value my life more than my money. Lower your pistol, spare my life, and I will give you ten thousand dollars and go with you until it is paid. You know I am an innocent man.

Pete. I know that now, that though you got the cunning of the devil, you got a dog's heart and a coward's liver.

{Threatens Miles with pistol.

Miles. Don't fire—for God sake—think of the money, man, think of the money!

Pete. To the devil's pot with your money, you trembling coward! If you to me was of a mountain of gold to offer, it would not be to change me more than a mountain of sand. I am going to kill you, Miles Corson, and these people won't interfere.

[Bardean starts towards Pete.

Kate pulls him back.

I killed Higgins—and here you go to keep him company!

[Aims pistol at Corson; works pistol, but it does not go off.

What the devil—

Miles. Your pistol is empty! Now we will see who is the best man. You are drunk; I am sober.

[Rushes upon Pete. Pete throws pistol away and grapples with Miles.

Pete. So you want a close hug with old bear, Mexican Pete? You are caught, you cunning fool.

[Miles tries to snatch Pete's knife from his belt.

Oh, no!

[They struggle.

You are close to death, Miles Corson.

[Suddenly draws knife. Throws

left arm about Miles neck.

Closer--closer --

*[Draws Miles suddenly to him and
stabs him several times in back.*

It 's got you!

*[Throws Miles from him. Miles
falls heavily near R.L.E. Pete
flourishes knife.*

Mexican Pete was never captured by a man, but he was by a woman.

*[Advances to Miles and looks down
upon him.*

That settles him

[Wipes knife on bandana.

No fool can win in the rogue business. He had of the cunning plenty, but not of the common sense. He was only a cunning fool.

*[Slips knife into sheath; steps back
and draws bottle from pocket.*
There's some left.

[Holds up bottle.

Here is to Senorita Bardona and to that quck young fellow who is rescue her from the horse thief.

[Drinks.

Here is to Senor Bardona whose horse we did not get.

[Drinks.

Here is to the Horse Queen of Elk creek.

Kate. Drink hearty!

[Pete drinks, throws bottle off

right, and picks up pistol. Backs slowly up stage slipping cartridges into pistol while talking.

Pete. It is that I have my horse tied to a place above the corral. It is time I should bring him to water. I am of many thanks to Senor Bardona and to the young Senor, the vaquero, that you have not come to prevent me when it was that I should settle with Corson. To remain would give me of pleasure, but of that you must excuse me, for I have important business in Wyoming.

[Report of rifle at distance off, R. Pete glances to R., and dashes off stage, L.U.E.]

Bardoan. What, now!

Kate. It may be the sheriff.

Sheriff Granson and posse rush on, R.U.E.

Bardoan. It is the sheriff—and a posse!

Sheriff. Hello, Bardoan! How do you do, ladies.

[Touches hat.]

We are out after horse thieves. We captured part of the gang, below. One of them gave up the combination. He led us to a corral in the Bald Hills. There we picked up two more of the gang, and found seven of the Queen's

horses in the corral. I sent them back to your ranch, Kate. They were a fine bunch.

Kate. Sure, you're the right man for your place, Tom Granson. There is no long hair and chape gun play about you.

[Hal steps forward and gazes at sheriff with interest.]

Sheriff. You must be a friend of mine, Kate.

Kate. So I am—and of ivery other man in this country who has th' courage and the manhood to face the powerful villany of the range and do his duty.

Sheriff. Well, to continue my story—The thief that led us to the Bald Hills corral said there was more of the gang; that they had another corral up at the old stockade near the Wyoming line.

Bardoan. This is the place. There are eleven of my horses here.

Sheriff. The thief also declared that a certain wealthy and prominet man of this county was secretly connected with the gang and had been working with it ever since he came into the country. He said, that while he knew of the fact, he did not know who the man was.—That he was known only to certain leaders of the gang. Have you seen any horse thieves up here?

Kate. Yes, sir, we saw all three of them. One of them killed the other two, and then struck out for Wyoming.

Sheriff. How long ago?

Kate. Long enough, that no man could catch up with him unless he had wings.

Sheriff. Well, I haven't any wings. Who was the fellow that did the killing?

Bardoan. He called himself Mexican Pete.

Sheriff. Bad man! I have had several calls for that scoundrel dead or alive. Where are the thieves the Mexican killed?

Bardoan. One is in the cabin; the other over there.

[All advance to Corson's body.]

Sheriff. Why, it is Corson! I tell you, Bardoan, I have been suspicious of that gentleman for some time. But he was too firmly intrenched behind the wall of organized and private interest to tackle him on suspicion alone.

Bardoan. I am convinced of his rascality. It is certain he was an accomplice of the gang.

[Bardoan and Sheriff converse aside.]

Sheriff. Did you see the Mexican finish him?

Bardoan. Yes, we all saw it.

Sheriff. Did Corson show the white feather?

Bardoan. He offered the Mexican ten thousand to spare his life.

Sheriff. That settles it—he is guilty. There is always cowardice in the blood of a knave, and he will show it when it comes to the test. The man who does not show it is never morally guilty. He is either the victim of circumstances or the unconscious instrument of extenuating causes. Let the evidence be what it may, at heart, I am always that man's friend. I never condemn a man for not knowing what he cannot know, or for not having what he cannot possess.

[*Wildcat Jake in loud voice outside,*

R.: "Come along and shut up, or I'll fill you so full of lead they kin sell you fer junk" *Sheriff runs up stage and looks off. R.U.E.*

Sheriff. (*To posse.*) Here comes that Wildcat Jake! I thought I had lost him. The fool fired into that dog-tent before I could stop him. He might have killed an innocent person. Had there been any horse thieves around his shot would have warned them of our presence. He crowded into the posse—but I've made up my mind what to do with him. He was Corson's man, Friday. I have a strong suspicion that he is connected

with the gang, and serving them as a spy. I shall act on my suspicion.

Enter Wildcat Jake leading Willie by collar, R.U.E. Jake is an old time specimen of frontier "bad man." Has long hair, and spread out mustache and beard. Has rifle in hand, and bowie knife and two pistols in belt. Belt is filled with cartridges.

[Posse crowds around them.]

Wildcat Jake. Look here, Sheriff, I found this feller hollerin' an' runnin' around in the timber like he didn't know where he wuz. I stole up on him and held him up with my rifle. I thought it might be a horse thief. But as soon I saw him I knew it was that feller from Boston. As soon as he saw me he tore 'round like he wuz loony. I thought mebbe he wuz one of them eujoniks wot's bin in an asylum and wuz out of dope, so I brought him in.

Sheriff. Well, you drop that young man from Boston.

[Wildcat Jake releases Willie. Willie runs to Sophronia.]

Sophronia. Why, it is Willie!

Sheriff. *(Seizing Wildcat Jake by collar.)* You come with me, Wildcat.

I've had all of your nonsense and officiousness I want. (*To one of the posse.*) Here, Brown, relieve this gentleman of his hardware.

[*One of the posse takes from Jake his rifle, bowie knife, pistols, and belt of cartridges.*]

Wildcat Jake. Why, Sheriff, what's the matter? What hev I done? What are you goin' to do with me?

Sheriff. I haven't quite made up my mind. When I have, I'll let you know. Come, I have something to show you.

[*Walks hurriedly to Mile's body, pulling Wildcat Jake along by collar.*]

There's a friend of yours.

[*At sight of Miles. Wildcat starts and cowers with criminal consciousness.*]

There is another friend of yours in the cabin.

[*Jerks Wildcat along over to cabin door. Opens door.*]

You go in there, and you'll stay in there until I call for you.

[*Thrusts Wildcat roughly into cabin.*]

Come, men, we'll put Mr. Corson in with his friend.

[*Posse pick up Corson and put him in cabin.*]

Vic, you guard that door. If Wildcat attempts to come out, shoot him.

[One of posse steps to door, salutes Sheriff, and guards door. Sheriff notices Hal.]

Who is that young man? I don't know him. *(To Hal—sharply.)* Where are you from, sir?

Hal. From Wyoming.

[Helen steps up close to Hal.]

Sheriff. What is your name?

Hal. Hal Halpin.

[Kate, Robert, Sophronia, and Willie advance to Hal and Helen.]

Sheriff. *(In gentler voice.)* Hal Halpin! Why,—you are not Mary Halpin's son?

Hal. Mary Halpin is my mother's name. Her maiden name was Mary Granson. Here is her picture.

[Opens locket on watch chain and shows Sheriff.]

Sheriff. *(Grasping Hal's hand.)* Why, boy, you are my sister's son.

[Bardoan and Kate converse aside.]

Bardoan The young man is all right—just as you said, Kate. You seem to know at sight.

Kate. Sure, I'm a mind raider.

Hal. Mother has often written me about my uncle Tom in the Black Hills. Several times I have determined to come

over and hunt you up, but something intervened each time to prevent me.

Sheriff. How do you happen here?

Hal. I am on my way to the old home down in Iowa. Last night I wandered off the trail somehow and about noon, to-day struck this place.

Sheriff. How long have you been in Wyoming?

Hal. About ten years. When but a mere boy, I started west to find you, but drifted into Wyoming and have been there ever since.

Sheriff. Well, you have found me, Hal, and you better remain with me. Your aunt will be rejoiced to have you with us. We have no children.

Hal. Have you met this young lady, uncle? This is Miss Bardoan.

Sheriff. (*Shaking Helen's hand.*) Helen and I are old friends.

Hal. She was captured by the horse thieves.

Sheriff. You don't say!

Helen. Yes, but I was rescued by your nephew. But for him, I was lost.

Sheriff. Is that so!

[*Slaps Hal on shoulder.*

Why, boy, you 'r a hero! Helen must tell me all about it.

[*Turns to posse.*

We will camp here to-night, men. Two

of you go over the hill and get that dog-tent and the coffee-pot. I will call up the rest of the posse with the horses and pack.

[Posse retires up stage, two exeunt R.U.E. Sheriff walks half up stage and with back to audience fires three shots in air from pistol.]

Sheriff. *(Turning.)* Come, Bardoan, we will go to the corral and look the horses over. The rest of the posse will soon be here with the horses and pack.

Bardoan. Just a moment Sheriff. Halpin, you and Willie better start back with the ladies to our camp. Helen will find the way. She is sure on ground she has once been over. I will follow shortly.

[Exeunt Hal, Helen, Sophronia, and Willie, L.L.E.]

Kate. *(Lingering.)* I'll have a hot cup 'o coffee for you, Robert.

Bardoan. Thank you, Kate.

[Exit Kate L.L.E. Bardoan joins Sheriff.]

Sheriff. Where have the folks gone?

Bardoan. To my camp on the creek.

Sheriff. Very good! It will soon be dark.

[Exeunt Sheriff, Bardoan, and all of posse, except guard at cabin,

into stockade closing gate behind them. Lights slightly lowered as of approaching twilight. Guard paces up and down befor cabin.

DROP-CURTAIN.

ACT V.

SCENE. *Same as scene in act first with the following changes: tent removed and all other properties of the camp except camp fire, R., several camp chairs, coffee-pot, frying-pan and box with some dishes on it. Camp fire burning; coffee-pot and frying-pan close to fire; camp chairs around fire; box with dishes on rear of fire.*

Robert Bardoan discovered seated in camp chair near camp fire reading a newspaper and smoking a cigar.

Robert. This is the first newspaper I've had for a week. The Sheriff gave it to me. And to find out that young man is his nephew! What if I had shot the boy? I must try and forget that. But for Kate, I would have done it. By heavens. I'll wear shamrocks for the rest of my life!

Enter Sheriff Granson, R.

Sheriff. Good morning, Bardoan!

Robert. *(Rising and advancing to meet Sheriff.)* Good morning, Sheriff!

Sheriff. I have sent all your horses, except Skip, down to your ranch. I wish you would let me have Skip for a few days. My horse is completely fagged.

Robert. Take him, Sheriff, with many thanks for the service you have rendered me and the county.

Sheriff. There is a fellow just over the Wyoming line I want. They call him Old Frenchie. He is sort of a brand artist. I have a scheme to decoy him over the line into this state, if the Mexican hasn't warned him. Once in Dakota, he's my bird. It may take me a few days. Wildcat Jake weakened about midnight and confessed his complicity. He said: "He didn't mind goin' to jail, but that it was agin his nater to live in a morgue." So I took him out of the cabin, gave him a big feed and about daylight sent him to town with my deputy and a couple of the posse. Well, I must return to the stockade.

[Going, then returning.]

Say, Bardoan, I am impressed Hal is struck with Helen.

Robert. That 's generally the way, Sheriff. A fellow rescues a girl, then marries her. *(Aside.)* I'm d—d glad he he didn't rescue Kate.

Sheriff. Helen will make the boy a

noble wife. Well, good-by! I will be with you in a few days.

[*Exit Sheriff, R.*]

Robert. Fine man! Hal is very much like him. Blood *will* tell. There's no mistake about that. A scrub 's a scrub, in the house or in the corral.

[*Enter Hal Halpin, L.*]

Hal. I have fed the wagon horses. Everything is ready for the move.

Robert. Well, we'll start out after dinner.

Hal. The Mexican took my horse. I'll have to ride to town with you.

Robert. My friend, I have a proposition to make to you. I need a good foreman, and if you care to remain with us, the place is open to you.

Hal. I did think, I'd quit the range. Not because I haven't done well on the range, but because I've grown tired of living so much alone. Guess I've grown tired of my own company. However, I have saved my money and made good deals. I have a thousand dollars in cash in my belt, and four thousand dollars in negotiable paper. I have no need to hunt a job, but you may put me down for yours.

Robert. Young man, my gratitude to you for what you have done for me and

mine, cannot be expressed in words. Is there anything in the world I can do for you.

Hal. Give me your daughter.

[*Robert stares at Hal for a moment, then throws away cigar.*]

I may appear a little previous in this, but that is my way. I am plain and direct in whatever I do.

Robert. Win her and she is yours.

Hal. Thank you! I hope I shall succeed in winning her regard—her love.

Robert. I am impressed, that you are inclined to play the sure game.

Hal. That's the way I made my money.

Robert. Very good; and it gives me pleasure and happiness to think of you as a son.

Hal. Thank you. Your daughter is the grandest, bravest, noblest girl in the world.

Robert. She has found her kind.

Hal. I am of the range.

Robert. Yes, (*Grasps Hal's hand.*) and one, I believe, who has all the virtues of the range and none of its vices.—A gentleman of the hat and spur.

Hal. Thank you again, sir. Helen is waiting at the wagon.

[*Exit, L*

Robert. There's matrimony in the air, I am in the humor of it myself. I'll rope Kate to-day or quit the range.

Enter Kate O'Brian. L.

Kate. Everything is ready, Robert. to move for town.

Robert. We'll start after dinner.

Kate. You don't seem to be in any hurry.

Robert. Oh, I take the world easy.

Kate. An' how does the world take you?

Robert. I guess in the same way.

Kate. You 'r quite a guesser. Can you guess what is next on your calendar?

Robert. My wedding.

Kate. What put that idea into your cauliflower?

Robert. What you said yesterday at the stockade.

Kate. I said a whole lot of things at the stockade, yesterday. To which of my sayings do you particularly refer?

Robert. You said if I did not discard Corson, you would never become my wife.

Kate. Well, what of it?

Robert. I inferred from that remark, that if I did discard him, you would

become my wife. Was my inference correct?

Kate. (*Confused.*) Yes, Robert.

Robert. Will you be my wife, Kate?

[*Throws arm about Kate.*]

Kate. Yes, Robert.

Robert. I had an intuition anyway, Kate, that you had made up your mind to become my wife. What do you think of my intuition?

Kate. It may be very good in respect to women, but it is very poor in respect to horse thieves.

Robert. I've thought for quite awhile we ought to be married.

Kate. And I've been suspicious for quite awhile, that you had designs upon my comfort and peace of mind.

Robert. Why, Kate, you'll be comfortable with me.

Kate. Well, if I'm not, you'll be very uncomfortable with me.

Enter Hal and Helen, L.

Helen. (*Laughing.*) Mamma!

[*Robert and Kate startled. Robert steps quickly to, R.*]

Kate. Yes, Helen, I am goin' to be your mamma.

Helen. (*Hugging Kate.*) My dear, dear Kate!

Kate. (*Hugging Helen.*) My own

darlin' girrel! I'd marry your father, if
for no other raison but to be near you.

Robert. Well, get the rods Kate, and we'll go up stream and catch some fish for dinner. I have an intuition that these young folks would like to visit by themselves for awhile.

Kate. (*Going.*) You're getting quite intuitive, Robert.

Robert. (*Taking off hat.*) Ah, Kate,
I can see ahead.

Kate. So can I,

[Glances at Robert's head.

But there's nothin' in it.

[Runs off, L.]

Robert. I'll get even with her for that.

[Puts on hat.

Enter Kate L. with fishing-rods. Throws rods down L. Selects rod for herself and goes up on bridge and fishes off left of bridge

Kate. Come, Robert.

Robert. Good-by, Helen.

| *Kisses her.*

My own dear, little daughter! All right, now.—And so happy! I hope you and Hal will be able to entertain each other.

Helen. I hope you and Kate will

catch some fish

[*Robert gets fishing-rod, L.*

Robert. Kate and I are good fishers.

Kate. I've caught a sucker already!

Robert. The deuce you have!

Kate. (*Holding up fish.*) This is
is number two.

[*Laughs.*

Sophronia caught number one.

Robert. (*Crossing bridge.*) Come on,
or I'll send for the conductor.

Kate. Or the milkman.

Robert. Sure!—We may need him.

[*Runs from bridge towards right.*

*Kate follows whacking him with
rod. He dodges and runs off, R.*

*Kate follows him laughing and
flourishing rod.*

Helen. You will go to the ranch with
us?

Hal. Yes.

Helen. And work for papa?

Hal. I did intend to leave the range.

Helen. But you won't?

Hal. No—I don't want to leave you.

Helen. I see no reason why you
should. I want you to stay.

Hal. My dear girl, in spite of our
short acquaintance, we have been quite
free in expressing our appreciation of
each other.

Helen. Why not?

Hal. I may not prove to be the man your grateful heart has pictured to your mind.

Helen. My heart has never yet deceived me.

Hal. I am a simple cowboy. I am strong of body, stout of heart, and true of purpose, but my mind has had but little cultivation. It is true I have read much, thought much, but to what real gain to my character and understanding, you will have to be the judge.

Helen. My mother died at my birth. Since then I have been under the care of my grandmother, my father's mother. She has lived with us ever since we came to the ranch. A teacher herself, and a woman of high character and intelligence, she has taught and guided me in the ways of knowledge and truth. Aside from this, I have grown up on the range, and am of the range. Experience and familiarity with danger have taught me some things which could have been learned in no other school. I know the true manhood of the range, and that you possess it. The instant I recognized it in you, it was impossible for me to conceal the interest and regard it awoke in me for you.

Hal. I am happy in your favorable opinion. What do you say, we set aside

all parlor preliminaries, and be as if we had always known one another?

Helen. When we know; to wait, to hesitate, to talk, is mere formality.

Hal. Shall we set it aside?

Helen. I am willing.

Hal. The divine purpose of man's love for woman, woman's love for man, is marriage.

Helen. I do not want to part with you.

[Slips her arm in his.]

Hal. I do not want to part with you.

[Raises arm around her neck.]

Helen. Then we better not part.

[Drops head on his shoulder.]

Hal. Will you be my wife.

Helen. Yes, dear.

Hal. And we'll be married soon?

Helen. Yes, dear.

[Hal kisses her.]

Hal. There! I think we've quite disposed of all formality.

*Enter Kate and Robert from R.
over bridge.*

Kate. She has captured the horse thief.

[Helen and Hal startled, turn.]
Don't let us interrupt you.

Hal. How many fish did you two catch?

Robert. Not a trout.

Hal. That 's what I thought. Come, Helen, you and I will try our luck.

Helen. Here are the rods.

[*Hal and Helen get fishing-rods, L.*
By-by, papa!

Hal. (*Going—waving hand to Kate.*)
By-by, mamma!

Kate. (*Laughing and shaking her rod at him.*) You thaif!

[*Exeunt Hal and Helen over bridge,*
R.

Robert. We might as well start dinner.

Kate. Yes, Robert, they'll soon be back.

[*Robert and Kate busy themselves getting dinner. They take food out of box.*

Robert. The fish don't seem to bite to-day.

Kate. (*Slaps face.*) But the flies do.

Robert. Kate, I believe Hal has proposed to Helen,

Kate. No doubt.

Robert. I'm mighty glad he didn't propose to you.

Kate. I am, too.

Robert. Would you have accepted him, Kate?

Kate. Of course not! I couldn't marry both o' you.

Robert. I never thought of that.

Kate. There's a whole lot of things you never thought of.

Robert. What do you suppose. Granny, will say when she hears of all this matrimony?

Kate. Poor Kate!

Robert. Nonsense!

Kate. Well, I hope she'll be pleased.

Robert. Why, Kate, she loves you more than I do, and I've nearly lost my appetite thinking how I love you.

Kate. I suppose you call that a lover's appetite you had at brickfast this mornin'? You ate twelve throut; four slices of bacon, a foot long; half a loaf of bread; and drank three cups of coffee. If you call that a sintamintal appetite, God hilp the woman that cooks for you whin you get back to your rigular feed.

Robert. You are a bird!

[*Shakes with laughter.*]

Kate. Well, I'm no camp-robber.

Robert. Why, here 's that souvenir spoon of mine!

[*Takes large iron spoon from box and advances to Kate with spoon in hand.*]

Kate, when you gave me this spoon, I knew I'd won.

Kate. Yes, you'd won but I'd lost.

Robert. No, Kate, we both won. It is a game in which both win if played according to the rules of providence.

Kate. Maybe you 'r right, Robert. Anyway, it 's a game I niver played before.

Robert. How about the conductor?

Kate. A joke—forget it.

Robert. Ah, Kate, we'll be very happy together.

[*Puts arm around her waist.*
We'll live smiling on each other.

Kate. Yes, Robert, like two sun-flowers in a gairden.

Robert. Oh, you are so full of spirits!

Kate. I take after me granfather. He was so full o' shpirrits, he died.

Robert. Well, I'd 'a' died, Kate, if I hadn't 'a' won you.

Kate. Died laffin

Robert. Oh, plague take you!

Enter Sophronia Simpson and Willie Wym from L. over briage. They have fishing rods.

[*Robert still has arm around Kate's waist.*

Sophronia. (*Pointing to Robert and Kate.*) Look, Willie! How lovely!

[*Robert and Kate startled, turn.*

Robert. Get any trout?

Willie. Not one.

Robert. Didn't catch anything?

Willie. Yes, I caught my breath several times.

Robert. (*Laughing.*) But no fish?

Willie. No; the fish seemed ashamed to look us in the face.

Kate. An' why, Willie?

Willie. Because—Oh, well!—Sophronia and I are to be married.

Sophronia. Yes, Willie and I are going to be married day after to-morrow, and start on our honeymoon. And then honey, honey, all honey.

Willie. (*Aside.*) Pooh, molasses—all molasses! I am a poor little fly stuck fast in the fly-paper of matrimony—three sheets for a nickle. It is just terrible what a man will endure for money!

Sophronia. Do you talk in your sleep, Willie?

Willie. No, but I sleep sometimes when I hear other people talk.

Sophronia (*Ecstatically.*) To think, we will be married day after to-morrow! Kate, when are you and Robert to be married?

Kate. Ask Robert.

Robert. Kate and I will be married as soon as we get to town. I shall greet my grand old mother at the ranch, this time, with a wife.

Willie. Say, Robert, you marry Sophronia, and let me marry Katy. You'd marry me, wouldn't you, Katy?

Kate. Yes, Willie, if I had nothing else to do.

Robert. (*Laughing.*) There'll be no swapping, sonny. I've won the Horse Queen of Elk creek and I shall keep her.

Sophronia. Robert, you are happy; Kate is happy; I am happy, and Willie is happy.

Willie. False! False! I am on the verge of suicide.

[*Starts towards K.*

Sophronia. (*Alarmed.*) Where are you going, Willie?

Willie. Insane.

Sophronia. Insane, Willie!

Willie. Yes, insane! I see things crawling all over the ground, and the air is full of stuffed bluebirds. Everything looks like Scotch plaid, and I feel a horrible appetite coming on me for beer and pig's feet.

Sophronia. Willie, Willie! What shall I do!

Willie. Give me that check for a thousand. It is the only thing that will save me.

Sophronia. You shall have it, love, just as soon as we are married.

Willie. (*Aside.*) I can't get away.

Sophronia. Where is Helen?

Kate. Up the straim with that young harse thaif.

Sophronia. Is she going to marry him?

Kate. No; he's going to marry her.

Willie. That's the way it is, Katy, with Sophroaia and me. I am not going to marry her; she is going to marry me.

Sophronia. Willie, talk sense.

Willie. How can I? I haven't any to talk.

Sophronia. When we are married you will know I am your wife.

Willie. No—no! I won't know anything.

Sophronia. No need to. You shall forget everything in the joy of my love.

Willie. That Scotch plaid is coming again!

Kate. Come, Robert, boil the coffee.

[*Robert puts coffee-pot on fire.*]

Helen and that thaif of a cowboy 'll soon be back. I don't suppose, he'll catch anything but a shtrong appetite for dinner.

Robert. Well, the coffee 's on.

[*Kate takes apron from box.*]

Kate. Well, put on this apron and slice the bacon while I get the throust.

[*Robert takes off coat, puts on apron, endeavoring to tie strings.*]

Sophronia, you can look these service berries over.

[Gets pail of berries and pan out of box and gives them to Sophronia.]

Robert. Kate, I wish you'd tie these apron strings. I can't make it.

[Kate ties apron strings for Robert.]

Kate. Sure, man. it 's a long ways around you.

Robert. I am rather full in the the waist.

Kate. A rigular Anheuser.

[Robert winks at audience and shakes with laughter.]

Sophronia. Come, Willie, help me with the berries. You can hold the pan.

[Willie and Sophronia get camp chairs, sit left and busy themselves with berries. Kate goes to tank for fish. Robert takes slab of bacon from box and proceeds to slice it, laying slices on a tin plate.]

Sophronia. Now, Willie, you hold the pan in your lap and I'll put the berries in it as I look them over. Do you like berries, Willie?

Willie. Yes, with plenty of cream on them. I am very fond of cream—ice cream. Oh, I could live on cream! When you give me that check, I will buy a small cow and we'll take her with us on our wedding trip.

[*Sophronia stares at Willie with alarm.*

The Baggage Man can feed her and the Breakman milk her. The pig's feet we can take in the sleeper with us.

Sophronia. Why, Willie, what is the matter with you?

Willie. My mind is wandering again.

Sophronia. (*Sharply.*) Is there insanity in your family?

Willie. Yes, my stepfather died in an asylum. I don't think I ought to marry.

Sophronia. Oh, you'll be all right after we are married.

Willie. (*Aside.*) No use! I can't get away.

Enter Hal and Helen R. over bridge. Without fishing-rods they pause on bridge.

Robert. Hello! What luck?

Hal. Not a fish.

Robert. I thought you wouldn't get any. I didn't.

Hal. I don't believe there's a fish in the creek.

Robert. Seems like it, to-day.

Helen. Why, papa, who put that apron on you?

Robert. Kate. I'm chief cook and bottle washer.

[*Kate advances with pan of trout.*

Kate. (*To Hal and Helen.*) Where are your fish?

Hal. We haven't caught them yet.

Kate. Ah-ha! An' your fish-poles, where are they?

[*Helen looks at her hands and then at Hal.*

Hal. Why—er—er—we loaned them to a couple o' fellows up the creek. I guess they belonged to the posse.

Kate. Oh, that's it!

Hal. Yes, they thought they could catch some fish.

Kate. I suppose they were welcome to those poles?

[*Sets pan of trout on box.*

Hal. Most assuredly. Helen and I were glad to get rid of them. We were disgusted with the fishing.

Kate. A foine fish story!

[*Hal and Helen advance.*
I'll buy you a little hatchet as soon as we get to town.

Hal. And I will buy you the finest silk in town, as a slight token of my thankfulness to you for the good you did me at the most trying moment of my life.

Kate. Faith! I'll wear that silk at your widding.

Sophronia. (*To Hal, rising.*) When

are you and Helen to be married?

[Sets pail of berries on chair.]

Hal. Three weeks from to-day.

Sophronia. Where?

Helen. At the old ranch.

*[Willie rises, drops pan in chair
and advances to Sophronia.]*

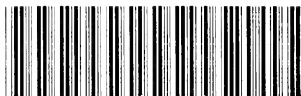
Robert. *(To audience.)* And we extend to all a cordial invitation to be present at the wedding.

Kate. The harse thair is caught,
an' the day is set for his execution.

*Robert and Kate, R.C. Hal
and Helen, C. Sophronia and
Willie, L.C.*

CURTAIN.

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